

IAS CONOPS

International Assistance System Concept of Operations

The IAS CONOPS is a supporting document of the National Response Framework (NRF), detailing when and how the U.S. Government (USG) accepts or requests offers of assistance from foreign countries following large-scale domestic disasters declared pursuant to the Stafford Act. The IAS will not be automatically activated for every large domestic disaster. It will only be activated if the USG requests or decides to accept international offers of assistance for the disaster response. **The best way countries can provide disaster assistance is through a cash donation to a private relief agency operating in the affected region.**

The IAS CONOPS establishes standard operating procedures for:

- Requesting assistance from foreign countries
- Reviewing foreign offers and determining whether to accept or decline these offers
- Managing the logistics of transporting, receiving, and distributing international donations

Roles and Responsibilities of Key Agencies

- **The Department of State (DOS)** acts as the focal point for receiving and responding to foreign governments' offers of assistance and communicates USG acceptance or declination of offers.
- **The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)** identifies potential resource requirements and officially accepts or rejects international offers using its gift acceptance authority.
- **The USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)** manages the logistical operations, ensures coordination with the regulatory agencies. USAID also activates and manages the database that tracks international assistance and requests for international resources.
- **Regulatory Departments and Agencies** expedite customs clearance for accepted resources and may collocate with USAID at the international commodity staging area to review incoming shipments.
- **The Department of Defense** may provide logistical assistance to support the IAS.

Recognizing that foreign policy considerations may be an element in a domestic crisis, the IAS CONOPS also addresses both the critical needs of the response operators and the foreign policy objectives of the diplomatic and national security communities. In creating a "Push" and "Pull" system, the IAS attempts to balance operational needs and diplomatic obligations.

The **IAS CONOPS** addresses both the critical needs of a response operation as well as the foreign policy objectives of the USG by employing a flexible system for accepting or securing assistance.

Acquiring Necessary Resources

An authorized Federal response agency may utilize the IAS to **acquire** resources that are needed but not available within the United States in either the time or quantity required. When activated, FEMA, DOS, USAID and regulatory agencies will work together to find international sources for the purchase of the needed resource, or in some cases, seek the donation of the item from a foreign nation or international organization.

Accepting Offers of Assistance

Whenever the decision is made to activate the IAS, the USG will only **accept** commodities that can enter the country without significant regulatory agency oversight or inspection and that can readily be used by the agencies and organizations involved in the disaster response.

For further information, domestic entities should contact FEMA's International Affairs office at fema-international@dhs.gov. Abroad, foreign governments should contact the U.S. embassy. Within the United States, foreign governments should contact the State Department country desk officer and/or Crisis Management Support at ses-o_cms@state.gov.